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ABSTRACT

Counseling needs of women enrolled at a university after an interruption in their formal educational training are explored. The target population was women who were at least 24 years old and who had not attended an educational institution for two years prior to enrolling in the university. A stratefied sample (N=20) was chosen from a computer search, and interviewed. These provided a basis for the needs assessment questionnaire mailed to the entire population (N=205). Perceived needs of the women interviewed changed little after enrolling and included: (1) acquisition of mental readiness to return to the university, (2) determination of intellectual capacity to achieve, (3) procurement of financial aid, (4) efficient time management, (5) career advancement, (6) overcoming test anxiety, (7) finding an identity, (8) procurement employability skills, (9) acceptance of more responsibility at work, and (10) completion of a degree. The greatest problems of returning women were the lack of employability skills training, their financial situation, and time management. Although this study is school-specific, it focuses on an issue of high concern, and includes a questionnaire which could be used as a basis for similar studies elsewhere. (Author/BMW)

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A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE COUNSELING NEEDS OF WOMEN ENROLLED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA AFTER AN INTERRUPTION IN THEIR FORMAL EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

TRENDS AND ISSUES

by

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THE B'RAY CENTER
for Counseling and Training

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE COUNSELING NEEDS OF WOMEN ENROLLED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA AFTER AN INTERRUPTION IN THEIR FORMAL EDUCATIONAL TRAINING

by

Barbara H. Ray

The purpose of this study was to determine the counseling needs of women enrolled at the University of West Florida after an interruption in their formal educational training. The target population was women who were at least 24 years of age and who had not attended an educational institution for two years prior to enrolling in the University.

A computer search was requested of women enrolled in the fall quarter 1978 to identify those who met the criteria. A stratified sample, selected to maintain group proportions consistent with those in the population, were interviewed. This procedure provided a basis for the needs assessment questionnaire which was subsequently developed, evaluated by two experts in the field, and mailed to the total population, followed by a second mailing to those who did not respond to the first mailing. The results were tabulated and analyzed, using descriptive statistics.

Perceived needs of the women interviewed changed little after enrolling in the university; needs enumerated

were to acquire mental readiness to return to the university, to determine intellectual capacity to achieve at the university level, to procure financial aid, to manage time efficiently, to advance in career, to overcome test anxiety, to find an identity, to procure employability skills, to accept more responsibility at work, and to finish a degree. These needs became an integral part of the needs assessment questionnaire.

A greater number of women returned to the University for vocational reasons (51%) than for intellectual-academic reasons (33%) or aesthetic reasons (15%).

The greatest problem of returning women with the University was the lack of employability skills training; the greatest problem in the area of self and family was their financial situation; and the greatest problem in the area of self was time management.

An on-going program to meet the counseling needs of the returning woman was non-existing in the University Counseling Center. This model was presented to and approved by Dr. James R. Holmes, Director. Future services can be expanded from this practicum.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing numbers of women across the nation are returning to colleges and universities after years away from formal education (American Center for Women's Opportunities: 1977).

Lowry (1976) in his article, "Those 'Emerging Women' as Undergraduates," ascertains adult females constitute a relatively large constituency on our college campuses, and their needs must be addressed. They will make an impact, not only on what is taught but also how it is taught. Motivation differentiates emerging women from the traditional college student. Women today are under pressure, consciously and unconsciously, due to a maze of societal forces--changing attitudes toward sex roles, marital relations, childbearing, and male-female parity in the job market. Women returning to college after an interruption in their formal education are characterized by their intensity--a relentless drive to "make it academically" and to ultimately prove something to themselves. Most attend on a part-time basis and range in age from 30 - 45. The primary reason for returning to college is to acquire the necessary background and skills for employment (Lowry: 1976).

The Voyager, a University of West Florida campus newspaper, in the December 1, 1977 issue, reported the results of a survey conducted by the Student Affairs office. Over half of the 183

student respondees, which were randomly selected from the winter quarter 1977 enrollment, were 24 years of age or older. The percentage of students who are of age 25 or older rose from 26 percent in 1971 to 53 percent in 1977. The late 70's have seen more blacks and women entering the institutions of higher education nationwide. At the University of West Florida, the black student population has increased by two percent since 1971, and the number of women has increased seven percent. Ninety-seven percent of the survey respondents had a particular field of study in mind. The greatest problem students anticipated in this survey was finances.

Presently, the University of West Florida Counseling Center does not have an on-going program to meet the counseling needs of the returning woman.

The purpose of this study was to determine the counseling needs of women enrolled in the University of West Florida after an interruption in their formal educational training. A computer search was requested to identify women who were at least 24 years of age and who had not attended an educational institution for two years prior to enrolling in the University. The identified women, 205 in number, became the target population.

A sample of 20 were interviewed. This procedure provided a basis for the needs assessment questionnaire which was subsequently developed, evaluated by two experts in the field, and mailed to the target population. The results were tabulated and analyzed, using descriptive statistics.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Literature abounds which specifies the needs of the returning woman to academia (Rieman, 1964; Sensor, 1964; Schletzer, Cless, McCune, Mantini and Loeffler, 1967; Lantz, 1968; Doty, 1970; Erickson, 1970; Thompson and Sager, 1970); however, research is limited in identifying their counseling needs.

Howard (1975) suggested that in addition to financial aid needs, the returning woman has special counseling needs as well as a need for flexible course scheduling. In her opinion, these three needs are the most pressing concerns of women who want to resume their education.

Spence (1977) suggested that women and blacks will increase in total enrollment, based upon enrollment projections for the 14 southern states. Relatively more students will be older than 24, will enroll part-time, and will seek career-related studies.

A study of degrees granted over the past ten years, conducted by the Association of American Colleges (Trends in Female Degree Recipients:1976), revealed that women have received an increasingly larger percentage of bachelors and higher degrees conferred in recent years. Degrees earned by women in 1974-75 amounted to

43.1 percent of all degrees awarded that year. However, the actual number of degrees awarded to women over a ten-year period more than doubled from 664,000 in 1964-65 to 1,305,000 in 1974-75.

Changing career aspirations of women are reflected in the increased number of women entering undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools. The 1975 census data (Project on the Status and Education of Women:1977 show that in the period from 1970 to 1975:

(1) The number of women aged 25 to 34 attending college rose more than 100 percent.
(2) Undergraduate enrollement of women increased 45 percent.
(3) First year enrollment in graduate and professional schools rose to almost 50 percent.
(4) The number of women receiving the doctorate increased by 59 percent and the number of women receiving the first professional degree increased by 184 percent.

For the first time in educational program legislation, specific provisions regarding the needs of women and their concerns were written into law, e.g. Educational Amendments of 1976, P.L. 94-482 (Impact on Guidance and Counseling: 1976). The Vocational Education Act (120(b)(1)(j);134(a)(4);134(a)(7);133(a)(2) has had an impact on guidance and counseling. Funds granted under the state's block grant may be utilized to provide counseling for women who enter job training programs which have traditionally been dominated by males. Under "Program Improvement and Supportive Services," which comprises 20 percent of block grant, states must spend a minimum of 20 percent of the available funds on guidance programs which may include vocational resource centers to assist individuals out of school, seeking second careers, or entering the job market late in life. These provisions recognize the

importance of supportive counseling for women (Impact: 1976).

Adickes (1976) saw the problems of adult working class women at Stanten Island Community College, New York, as ambivalance and resistance from husband, guilt feelings as a consequence of having to leave their children for extended periods of time, lack of institutional sensitivity to unique needs of returning women, academic sexual stereotyping, and lack of sensitivity of male faculty members. Adickes (1976) maintains that specific counseling is needed to encourage returning women in their efforts.

Geisler and Thrush (1975) maintained that the pressure of time, the wish for counseling geared to adults, and the importance of vocational goals in the decision to return to school are recurrent themes in studies of returning women.

Howard (1975) maintained that reentering women need a carefully thought out educational base, a plan for growth, and meaningful guidance and counseling. Counseling should be avocational and familial as well as academic and vocational. As long as a marked differentiation in societal perceptions of "proper" roles for females exist, special counseling will continue to be an important part of women's college education. For some women, all that is needed to propel them toward reeducation is the awareness that other reentering or late-entering students share their fears of an inability to succeed among younger students, problems of lacking self-confidence, and problems of poor self-image (Shishkoff: 1973). The attitude to downplay self assertiveness and economic reasons for new career goals exists (Howard: 1975).

Roelfs (1976:6) concluded that

> "...The growing number of adults returning to college brings with them differences in maturity and lifestyles that may call for new approaches to counseling, particularly in the areas of helping students budget their time and balance their roles on and off campus."

Barbier (1971) asserted the need for special and sensitive counseling as women in their middle years move from home through retraining to employment.

In California community colleges, reentry programs stress community base self-help programs as well as group dynamics They encourage a spirit of colleagueship by establishing groups which meet for tutoring, peer counseling, and group reinforcement (Howard:1975).

Another community college program is the Women's Reentry to Education Center (WREC) at City College of San Francisco, featuring peer-group counseling, a feature which removes some of the threat of the authority figure and underlines the universality of problems which most returning women experience (Howard:1975).

San Jose University offers a special counseling and service center for older students. Reentry Advisory Program (R.E.A.P.) presents special group and workshop programs designed to ease the mature adult's transition back into college life. Another innovative feature of R.E.A.P. is the use of reentry student volunteers to facilitate the small group meetings and assist in providing basic advisory services (Howard:1975).

Florida International University's "Institute for Women," begun in October 1973 and supported in part by HEA Title I funds, offers the RESPECT workshop (Resume Preparation and Effective

Confidence Techniques) which teaches women to demonstrate what they know to best advantage by instilling confidence and a positive self-concept (Howard: 1975).

Data collected by the Center for Continuing Education of Women, University of Michigan, 1973, revealed that women come to that center to seek professional consultation at a variety of decision points in their lives. They assist women to plan for and control the changes in their lives; this aspect will increase needed services in the future (Howard:1975). Walker (1974:4) maintains

> "...to do our job as counselors, we must be able to assist women through the constancy of change with its continuing need for decision making."

Skills in coping with the demands of living can be taught. However, in traditional higher education, coping skills are usually not taught. Moreover, the University of West Florida Counseling Center has the capabilities to teach these skills through counseling and psychological services. The Center offers assistance in dealing with concerns in areas of personal, social, marital, vocational, and educational adjustment; professional consultation in crisis siutations; stress and anxiety management; assistance in career development through vocational counseling; opportunities for growth through exploration of personal goals, values, attitudes, abilities and interpersonal relationships in groups or individual settings; and assistance in developing and improving study habits and skills. Counseling center services are rendered through counseling and testing individuals and groups, meeting with University classes or other groups of students, and providing resource information.

To succeed in two careers simultaneously, the enrolled woman over 24 years of age attending the University must be coping with the pressures of returning to academia after a prolonged delay in her educational training, adjusting to demands on and off campus, and managing time and stress to facilitate her remaining in the academic environment until her educational goal is attained. If the University Counseling Center can assist in these tasks, then the institution and the student benefit.

This investigation is appropriate for the Trends and Issues module for the following reasons:

1. The goal of women today is to get quality education and training to develop their abilities and interests, and help them to become educated for liberation and survival (Hart:1977; Lowrey:1976; Slevin:1973).
2. Research abounds with the fact that women are the fastest growing sector of the labor force. Projections are that this expectancy will increase in the future.
3. The recent increase in the number of women entering college will lengthen the worklife of women, since the more education a woman has, the more likely she is to work. (Mitchell:1975).

PROCEDURE

Since the purpose of this study was to determine the counseling needs of women enrolled at the University of West Florida after an interruption in their formal educational training, the following procedures were undertaken:

1. A computer search was requested to identify all women enrolled in the University in the fall quarter 1978 who met the following criteria:

    a. age: 24 years or older. Age 24 represents the average of 53 percent of the students enrolled in the University of West Florida in the winter quarter 1977, according to a survey conducted by the Student Affairs office during that quarter.

    b. status: undergraduate, graduate, or special student.

    c. transfer status: must not have attended an institution of higher education for two years prior to enrolling in the University.

2. When the computer search was received, a stratified sample of 20 from the total population of 205 was interviewed using open-ended questions (Appendix A). The stratified sample was selected to maintain group proportions consistent with those in the population following the concept of Sheehy's (1973) "passages" of adult development from 18 years to death:

Ages 24 - 29 = 56 percent (10 - interviews)

Ages 30 - 39 = 41 percent (8 interviews)

Ages 40 - 49 = 2 percent (1 interview)

Ages 50 and over = 1 percent (1 interview)

3. Utilizing the 20 interviews and an adaptation of the four-page questionnaire developed for the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Geisler and Thrush:1975), an objective needs assessment questionnaire was constructed, using a Likert scale for evaluation of responses (Appendix B).

Services which are often offered by colleges and university counseling centers were listed with a 5-point response scale for evaluation using the following key:

1 = I have a need for this service now.
2 = I expect I will use this service.
3 = I may or may not use this service.
4 = I probably will not use this service.
5 = I definitely will not use this service.

. To establish validity of the questionnaire, the questionnaire was evaluated by two experts in the field and their recommendations were incorporated. The questionnaire was mailed to the entire population of 205 with a cover letter (Appendix C). A two-week response time was allowed, followed by a second mailing to all who did not respond to the first mailing. A total of 135 women or 65 percent of those sampled became the respondent group.

5. To ascertain that the respondent group met the criteria of age 24 or older and who had not attended an educational institution for two years prior to enrolling in the university, the following questions were included: "Prior to enrolling in the University of West Florida this quarter, when did you last attend

college (qtr./sem., year)?" "Please give the name of the institution you attended then." "What was your most important reason for returning to college?" "Are you (a) (an) undergraduate, graduate or special student?" "What is your present age?"

6. The results of the questionnaire were analyzed, using descriptive statistics (Gilli:1977).

7. Recommendations resulting from the questionnaire analysis were submitted to the Director of the University Counseling Center in order for him to consider extending Center services to women enrolling at the University of West Florida after an interruption in their educational training.

RESULTS

In the interviews with the sample of 20 from the total population, the following information was gleaned from the nine open ended questions:

To the question, "What was the most important reason for your present enrollment in the University?" the most observed answers were: to finish an undergraduate degree; to procure a master's degree; to meet certification requirements; to advance in a career; to seek fulfillment, knowledge, competency in a field; to find an identity; to gain confidence; and to procure a higher paying job.

To the question, "Has the transition back into the academic setting and the demands of the University been easy for you? If yes, what has made it easier?" the most observed answers were: it hasn't been that long out of undergraduate school; financial aid; satellite campuses; day care center on the main (Pensacola) campus; tuition assistance from employer; University Counseling Center; courses at night; and children in school.

To the question, "What has made the transition difficult?" the most observed answers were: children's schedule of activities and husband's work schedule; travel time to campus; length of

time out of school before returning; harder to meet the University requirements with working full time; no advisor for special students; deficiencies in background; disruptions at home; overwhelmed with the course work; lack of time management; inadequate child care; and lack of financial aid.

To the question, "What did you perceive to be your needs prior to enrolling in the University at this time?" the most observed answers were: to get mentally ready to return to the University, to ascertain that I was capable of achieving at the university level; to procure financial aid; to allocate time to study; to get into a position on advancement in a career; to get a better paying job; to overcome test anxiety; to find an identity; to procure employability skills; to prepare to accept more responsibility on the job; and to finish a degree.

To the question, "Did your needs change after you enrolled and became involved in the requirements of your coursework? If yes, how did your needs change? the most observed answers were: to meet degree requirements; to meet family demands; to participate in assertiveness training; and to budget more time to study. Eighty percent of those interviewed answered no.

To the question, "What difficulties have you encountered since enrolling in the University?" the most observed answers were: adjustment to working and attending college; financial difficulties; difficulties in attending labs; lack of childcare facilities; studying at home; registration closing at 4:30 p.m. and difficulty in getting questions answered.

To the question, "Where did you seek help to solve these difficulties?" the most observed answers were: self-analysis; vocational rehabilitation counselor; financial aid office; took leisure series to meet friends; friends and family; professor; advisor; and credit union.

To the question, "Did you encounter problems in any of these areas: course schedule, placement in courses, degree of University encouragement, age discrimination, sex discrimination, husband's lack of helpfulness, child care facilities, financial situation, other family areas (specify), time pressures, role definition, self-confidence, sense of direction, other personal areas (specify), anxiety, doubting your own abilities, 'putting it all together?'" the most observed answers were: husband's lack of helpfulness (35%), doubting own abilities (30%), anxiety (25%), child care (10%), study skills and study time, lack of confidence, lack of home organization, no advisor for special students (1%).

To the question, "Did you consider counseling and the services of the University Counseling Center as a viable solution to problems you encountered since returning to the University?" the most observed answers were yes (45%)--but only if a big problem were encountered; no (55%). Further comments were: would consult advisor; would try financial aid office.

The answers to the first interview question were combined on the questionnaire into three generalized reasons for returning to academia: aesthetic, academic/intellectual, and vocational.

The answers to the remaining interview questions were interspersed throughout the needs assessment questionnaire, particularly in the possible problem areas of self and the university, self and the family, and self.

Question nine was developed into a Likert scale to evaluate services which are often offered by college and university counseling centers. The respondees were asked to evaluate campus-wide counseling and advising services as well.

Demographic data gleaned from the respondees included the following (see Appendix B):

The age ranges were 24 - 29 (32%), 30 - 39 (43%), 40 - 49 (13%), 50 and over (6%). Seven percent were single, 67% were married, and 25% had been previously married. Sixty-six percent had children. Twenty-seven percent worked part time (less than 40 hours per week) and attended the University; 21 percent worked full-time while attending. Eleven percent were on financial aid, of which one percent had scholarships. Forty-five percent expressed a need for financial aid to continue their education.

Educational data included (see Appendix B):

All of the respondees had enrolled in the University after an interruption of some length of time in their formal education. Their reasons for returning to academia were varied, as indicated by the three catagories: academic/intellectual (33%), which included finishing an undergraduate degree, earning a master's degree, meeting graduate school admissions requirements, updating education, meeting certification and recertification requirments; vocational (51%)-which included completing a degree to support

or aid in support of family, promotion in career, becoming employable, working at a satisfying job; aesthetic (1%)-which included self-fulfillment, meeting a challenge, furthering an interest in a new field, self-improvement, helping self and others, and assuaging boredom. One percent did not respond.

Thirty-two percent were seeking a bachelor's degree as the highest degree, 42 percent were seeking a master's degree, while 23 percent were non-degree seeking students; three percent did not respond to the question. Forty-seven percent were enrolled as undergraduates, 28 percent of which were part-time while 18 percent were full-time. (A full-time undergraduate student carries 15 or more quarter hours of coursework). Eighteen percent were graduate students, 12 percent of which were part-time while six percent were full-time. (A full-time graduate student carries ten or more quarter hours of coursework). Thirty-five percent were special students. (A special student is a non-degree seeking student and may carry up to 15 quarter hours of coursework). Overall, 75% of the total respondent sample were part-time students--both at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Sixty-five percent of the respondees attended the main campus at Pensacola, while 15 percent attended the Eglin-Walton County campus, and 18 percent attended Panama City campus. Two percent did not respond to the question.

The majority of the returning women were enrolled in Alpha College with 35 percent majoring in education, seven percent

majoring in English and biology respectively, five percent majoring in accounting, less than five percent majoring in humanities, home economics, foreign languages, finance, marketing, nursing, art and communications arts. Enrollees in Omega College included eight percent majoring in social work, five percent majoring in psychology, less than five percent majoring in management, health systems science, business, public administration, criminal justice, music, and vocational education.

Counseling needs included (see Appendix B):

Fifty percent reported satisfaction with the campus counseling services of admissions and registration, five percent were dissatisfied. Thirty-eight percent were satisfied with the faculty advising; eight percent were dissatisfied. Thirty-two percent reported satisfaction with the services received in the area of educational guidance; six percent were dissatisfied. Twenty-one percent were satisfied with the library orientation; six percent were dissatisfied. Eleven percent were satisfied with the financial aid counseling they received; fifteen percent were dissatisfied. Seven percent were satisfied with career counseling; ten percent were dissatisfied. Twenty-nine percent received no counseling in any of the areas of admissions and registration, faculty advising, educational guidance, library orientation, financial aid, nor career counseling.

When asked to react to specific suggestions for group counseling for women who have enrolled in the University after an interruption in their educational training, 19 percent felt

it was a good idea while 26 percent felt it was not necessary. Although 43 percent felt it might be a good idea, 34 percent indicated they would attend; 51 percent indicated they would not attend. Ten percent were undecided.

The students were asked to reflect the extent to which they had experienced problems in three general areas since enrolling in the University: the University, the family, and self. The greatest problem with the University was the lack of being provided with employability skills training which traditionally includes self-presentation in the job interview and resume writing (72%), followed by scheduling of courses (42%), financial aid, (32%), faculty advising (31%), meeting degree requirements (31%), no advisor for special students (19%), meeting other students (15%), the registration hours (12%), and counseling services (10%). Another area written in was: more evening courses for working students.

In the area of "You and Your Family" the respondees stated that their financial situation was a problem (43%), followed by children's lack of helpfulness (17%), the convenience of childcare facilities (15%), and husband's negative attitude (14%). Other problems cited were: scheduling of family/own activities, need for evening childcare facilities, and not enough family time together.

The category with the largest number of problems in the area of "Yourself" was time management (66%), with test anxiety (54%) ranking second, followed by stress management (37%), lacking self-confidence (37%), doubting own abilities (37%), math anxiety (35%), putting it all together (29%), lacking effective study skills (27%),

lacking effective communication skills (22%), problems with identity (14%), and no encouragement from others (14%). Other areas mentioned by respondess were: juggling schedules of family members, procrastinating, ill children, no time to self, and inability to locate employment.

In response to the question, "What might the University of West Florida do--if anything, to help women who have returned to college after an interruption in their education?" the following are exemplary:

-Have an orientation session prior to commencement of the quarter to include effective study skills, time management, ways to build confidence and improve self-image, overcome test anxiety; encourage a course in speech.

-Mail booklets to returnees with tips for successful re-entry.

-Have a special advisor for special students.

-Assess "where they are" academically and make recommendations.

-Orientation session for potential employment areas since most women return to college to gain employment.

-More vocational and career counseling.

-Scheduling classes for the working person; more basic courses in the evening to encourage a return to college.

A list of all comments are included in Appendix D.

Evaluation of services which are often offered by colleges and university counseling centers were objectively evaluated using a Likert scale to measure the extent of agreement or disagreement with the statements of opinion regarding the services. The prepon-

derance of the responses (see Table 1) were far closer to 5 (I definitely will not use this service) than to 1 (I have a need for this service now) as shown by the modal value which is given to the left of each statement.

(4) 1. Personal counseling

(4.5) 2. Social & interpersonal relationships counseling

(5) 3. Marital counseling

(3) 4. Vocational counseling

(3) 5. Educational counseling

(4) 6. Crisis situation counseling

(4) 7. Stress and anxiety management training

(3) 8. Career development counseling

(5) 9. Exploration of personal life goals, values, attitudes, and abilities

(5) 10. Study habits and study skills

(5) 11. Interests, values, attitudes, and personality testing

(3.5) 12. Individual counseling on walk-in or appointment basis

(5) 13. Divorce adjustment counseling

(3.5) 14. Resource information and/or referral to other professionals

(5) 15. Test anxiety management training

(5) 16. Time management training

(5) 17. Single parenting counseling

(5) 18. Building self-confidence

(4) 19. Second career counseling

(5) 20. Training in assertive communication

TABLE 1

Summary of Questionnaire Response by Items

Statement	(1) I have a need for this service	(2) I expect I will use this service	(3) I may or may not use this service	(4) I probably will not use this service	(5) I definitely will not use this service	No response
1	12	7	27	53	35	1
2	4	8	19	50	50	4
3	1	0	13	5	77	39
4	15	27	37	28	22	6
5	18	34	36	25	15	7
6	3	4	21	54	44	9
7	8	8	25	44	40	10
8	26	28	43	21	14	3
9	13	10	25	37	39	11
10	11	10	23	35	48	8
11	5	5	27	34	56	8
12	9	11	38	38	30	9
13	2	1	5	27	89	11
14	7	16	36	36	24	18
15	13	9	20	45	47	1
16	12	11	34	34	36	10
17	6	5	8	16	88	12
18	11	11	17	35	50	11
19	14	16	32	32	32	9
20	16	5	31	29	42	12

N = 135

The results are summarized according to the number of women who responded (see Table 1).

When asked, "What additional services might the University Counseling Center offer to help women who have returned to college after an interruption in their education?" the women responded with the following exemplary statements:

-Make themselves available as a place to begin when a special student doesn't know to whom to go for advice.

-Design an in-depth program to renew self-confidence for those who feel it lacking when competing with bright, quick minds.

-Acquaint them with university and counseling services.

-Send booklets on time management and study skills.

-Help and encourage them in attaining their goals.

A list of all comments are included in Appendix E.

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of respondee feedback indicated that the survey questionnaire served as a vehicle through which the University community and the University Counseling Center discern the needs of women returning to academia after an interruption in their formal educational training.

The following needs were evident:

1. Although 11 percent were on financial aid (Appendix B, Item 16.1), 45 percent indicated a need for financial aid to continue their education (Appendix B, Item 17.1). This concurs with Howard's (1975) findings. Sources of monies need exploring.
2. A greater number of women (51%) returned to the University for vocational reasons (Appendix B, Item 3.2) than for academic/intellectual or aesthetic reasons. This fact concurs with Lowrey's (1976) findings. More vocational counseling is needed.
3. Slightly over one-third (35%) of the respondents were special students (Appendix B, Item 7.3); nineteen percent indicated that having no advisor for special students posed a problem for them (Appendix B, Item 19.8). They

suggest a special counselor/advisor for special students (Appendix D).

4. The majority continue to seek education in traditional majors (p. 16); many will ultimately be filtered into traditional careers upon graduation. In traditional careers where a preponderance of women are concentrated, salaries are low (Shishkoff:1973). Since 51% of the women return to academia for vocational reasons (Appendix B, Item 3.2), career counseling is needed to explore non-traditional careers where salaries may be higher and opportunities for women may be greater.
5. Returning women do not utilize campuswide counseling services available to them with almost one-third (29%) receiving none (Appendix B, Item 18.7).
6. Group counseling for returning women is not the answer to meeting their needs as indicated by 51 percent who responded they would not attend such a group (Appendix B, Item 22.7).
7. The women expressed a great need for employability skills training (72%) which traditionally includes self-presentation skills in the job interview and resume writing (Appendix B, Item 19.5). This implies a joint effort within

several departments to accomodate this need.

8. With almost half the respondees working (48%) (Appendix B, Item 13.1), course scheduling needs examination to determine if more evening courses could be scheduled for working students.
9. Time management is a problem to two-thirds (66%) of the returning women (Appendix B, Item 21.1); test anxiety ranks second in magnitude (Appendix B, Item 21.2)--facts which establish sufficient evidence of need for special counseling/programming in these areas.

The preponderance of responses to services which are often offered by college and university counseling centers precipitated the following recommendations:

1. The University Counseling Center should serve as a beginning point in serving special students who may be in need of educational, vocational, or self exploration to choose a major best suited to their needs.
2. The Center should sponsor a program to facilitate confidence building, utilizing the existing stress management program. Resources of the Psychology Department should be utilized to assist the returning woman overcome test anxiety; the Mathematics Department should be utilized to assist in overcoming math anxiety; and the Center in

conjunction with the Placement Office should be utilized to teach self-presentation skills for the job interview.

3. The Center should sponsor the publication of a pamphlet of the University and the University Counseling Center services in joint effort with other departments on campus. The pamphlet should include time management strategies, effective study skills, and sources of available monies, including scholarships and loans. Pictures and comments of returning women should be included.
4. The University Counseling Center should be publicized as a supportive service to returning women.
5. The University community should be made aware of the needs of returning women and should combine efforts to serve their needs.

The results of this practicum suggest the following recommendations to the University of West Florida:

1. The data support the need of the University to sponsor a brief orientation program at the satellite campuses to inform returning women of the services of the University and University Counseling Center.
2. Support the University Counseling Center with financial assistance to publish a pamphlet for the returning woman to be mailed or distributed at registration.
3. Assign an advisor to special students.
4. Investigate sources of monies to be designated for

continuing education of both part-time and full-time returning women.

5. This study suggests another study which would evaluate the success of this study in terms of increased numbers of women who enroll in the University after an interruption in their educational training compared to the present number.

With these recommendations, a target population heretofore not served may be served. The University community will be made aware of the needs of returning women to academia by the University Counseling Center, and of the need for services by the women enrolled in the University after an interruption of their educational training.

The findings in this study only relate to the population studied and cannot be generalized to a larger population.

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APPENDIX A

Open Ended Questions and Selected Responses

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS AND SELECTED RESPONSES

1. What was the most important reason for your present enrollment in the University?

   To finish an undergraduate degree, to procure a master's degree, to meet certification requirements, to advance in (my) career, to seek fulfillment, knowledge, competency in a field, to find an identity, gain confidence, and to procure a higher paying job.

2. Has the transition back into the academic setting and the demands of the University been easy for you? If yes, what has made it easier?

   It hasn't been that long out of undergraduate school, financial aid, satellite campuses, day care center on the main campus, tuition assistance from employer, University Counseling Center, courses at night, and children in school.

3. What has made the transition difficult?

   Children's schedule of activities and husband's work schedule, travel time to campus, length of time out of school before returning, harder to meet University requirements with working full-time, no advisor for special students, deficiencies in background, disruptions at home, overwhelmed with the course work, lack of time management, inadequate child care, and lack of financial aid.

4. What did you perceive to be your needs prior to enrolling in the University at this time?

   To get mentally ready to return to the University, certainty that I was capable of achieving at the university level, financial aid, to allocate time to study, to get into a position of advancement in a career, to get a better paying job, to overcome test anxiety, to find an identity, to procure employability skills, to prepare to accept more responsibility on the job, and to finish a degree.

5. Did your needs change after you enrolled and became involved in the requirements of your coursework? If yes, how did your needs change?

   To meet degree requirements, to meet family demands, to participate in assertiveness training, and to budget more time to study. Eighty percent of those interviewed answered no.

6. What difficulties have you encountered since enrolling in the University?

Adjustment to working and attending college, financial difficulties, difficulties in attending labs, lack of child care facilities, studying at home, lack of time management, overwhelmed by work requirements, registration closing at 4:30 p.m., lack of financial aid, and difficulty in getting questions answered.

7. Where did you seek help to solve these difficulties?

Self-analysis, vocational rehabilitation counselor, financial aid office, took leisure series course to meet friends, friends and family, professor, advisor, and credit union.

8. Did you encounter problems in any of these areas: course schedule, placement in courses, degree of University encouragement, age discrimination, sex discrimination, husband's helpfulness, child care facilities, financial situation, other family areas (specify), time pressures, role definition, self-confidence, sense of direction, other personal areas, (specify), anxiety, doubting your own abilities, "putting it all together?"

Husband's helpfulness, doubting own abilities, anxiety, degree of University encouragement, "putting it all together," child care, financial situation, study skills and study time, lack of confidence, lack of home organization, no advisor for special students.

9. Would you have considered counseling and the services of the University Counseling Center as a viable solution to problems you've encountered since returning to the University?

Yes (45%), and only if a big problem were encountered; no (55%), would consult advisor, would try to rely upon self, husband, or friend, would try financial aid office.

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA
UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER

SURVEY OF WOMEN
QUESTIONNAIRE & PERCENT RESPONSES

UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA
UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER

SURVEY OF WOMEN — NOVEMBER 14, 1978

1. Prior to enrolling in the University of West Florida this quarter, when did you last attend college? varied (qtr./sem. (year))

2. Please give the name of the institution you attended then.

(varied)

3. What was your most important reason for returning to college? (check one)

33% (3.1) Academic/intellectual (Example: to finish an undergraduate degree, to meet certification requirements
51% (3.2) Vocational (Example: to advance in my career, to get a job, to help support the family, etc.)
15% (3.3) Aesthetic (Example: self-fulfillment, to gain conficence, to find an identity, etc.)
1% no response

4. What is your present age? 24 - 29 (32%); 30 - 39(43%); 40 - 49 (13%); 50 & over (6%)

5. What is your marital status? (check one)

7% (5.1) Single 67% (5.2) Married 2% (5.3) Separated 21% (5.4) Divorced 3% (5.5) Widowed

6. What are the ages of your children at home with you?

34% (6/1) No children at home, or ___ (6.2), 2 yrs. (6.3) - 22, yrs. (6.4) (6.5). (ages)

7. Are you (a) (an) 47% (7.1) undergraduate 18% (7.2) graduate 35% (7.3) special student

8. What is the highest degree you are seeking? (check one)

32% (8.1) Bachelors 42% (8.2) Masters 23% (8.3) No degree

9. Which campus do you attend? (check one)

65% (9.1) Main (Pensacola) 15% (9.2) Eglin-Walton County 18% (9.3) Panama City

10. Are you (check one) 75% (10.1) Part-time (less than 10 qtr. hrs. - graduate level; less than 15 qtr. hrs. - undergraduate level) 25% Full-time (10 or more qtr. hrs. - graduate level; 15 or more - undergraduate level)

11. How many quarter hours are you taking?____ (12% = less than 10 qtr. hrs., graduate level; 6% = 10 qtr. hrs.+, graduate level; 28% = less than 15 qtr. hrs., undergraduate level; 18% = 15 qtr. hrs.+, undergraduate level.

12. What is your major? (see page 16)

13. Are you working at a paying job in addition to attending the University? (check one) 48% yes (13.1) 52% no (13.2)

14. If yes to #13, how many hours per week do you work? (check one)
27% Less than 40 (14.1) 21% 40 or more (14.2)

15. Do you have any kind of scholarship? (check one) 1% yes (15.1) 99% no (15.2)

16. Do you have any kind of financial aid? (check one) 11% yes (16.1) 89% no (16.2)

17. Do you feel a need for financial aid to continue your education? (check one) 45% yes (17.1) 55% no (17.2)

18. Listed below are several possible areas of counseling or advising. For each area in which you received some help since enrolling in the University, please indicate if you were satisfied with the information given. Circle the number of your response, using the following key:

1 = Satisfied 2 = Dissatisfied 3 = Received no counseling

RESPONSE			SERVICE
32%1	6%2	62%3	18.1 Educational guidance
21%1	6%2	73%3	18.2 Library orientation
38%1	8%2	54%3	18.3 Faculty advising
11%1	15%2	74%3	18.4 Financial assistance
7%1	10%2	83%3	18.5 Career development
50%1	5%2	15%3	18.6 Admissions and registration
		29%	18.7 Check here if you received no counseling in any of the above areas.

19. Listed below are several areas where students could have adjustment problems. Please review this list and for each area, check the extent to which you feel it is a problem to you currently. Circle the number of your response, using the following key:

1 = Major problem 2 = Minor problem 3 = no problem

RESPONSE				POSSIBLE PROBLEM AREA
				YOURSELF AND THE UNIVERSITY
10%1	32%2	58%3	19.1	Scheduling courses
10%1	21%2	69%3	19.2	Meeting degree requirements
2%1	10%2	88%3	19.3	Registration hours
7%1	24%2	69%3	19.4	Faculty advising
8%1	64%2	28%3	19.5	Employability skills training
2%1	13%2	85%3	19.6	Meeting other stduents
13%1	19%2	67%3	19.7	Student financial aid
13%1	6%2	81%3	19.8	No advisor for special students
4%	6%	90%3	19.9	Counseling services
			19.10	Other (specify) (see page 18)
				YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY
7%1	7%2	86%3	20.1	Husbands negative attitude
7%1	10%2	83%3	20.2	Children's lack of helpfulness
14%1	1%2	85%3	20.3	Convenience of childcare facilities
24%1	19%2	57%3	20.4	Financial situation
			20.5	Other family areas (specify) (see page 18)
				YOURSELF
16%1	50%2	37%3	21.1	Time management
13%1	41%2	46%3	21.2	Test anxiety
4%1	10%2	86%3	21.3	Identity
5%1	17%2	78%3	21.4	Interpersonal communication
11%1	26%2	63%3	21.5	Stress management
11%1	26%2	63%3	21.6	Self-confidence
19%1	16%2	65%3	21.7	Math anxiety
10%1	27%2	63%3	21.8	Doubting own abilities
4%1	23%2	63%3	21.9	Study skills
4%1	10%2	86%3	21.10	No encouragement from others
8%	21%2	71%3	21.11	Putting it all together
			21.12	Other (specify page 13

22. Some women students in your age group have urged that some way be found so that similar women students could meet regularly and discuss mutual interests and problems. Others say this is not necessary.

To what extent do you feel meeting regularly would be a good idea?

1% (22.1) an excellent idea — 7% (22.2) a very good idea — 19% (22.3) a good idea — 43% (22.4) might be a good idea — 26% (22.5) not necessary

Would you attend such a group? (check one) 34% (22.6) yes — 51% (22.7) no

23. What might the University of West Florida do--if anything, to help women help who have returned to college after an interruption in their education?

(see Appendix D)

24. Listed below are services which are often offered by college and university counseling centers. Circle the number of your response, using the following key:

1 = I have a need for this service now.
2 = I expect I will use this service.
3 = I may or may not use this service.
4 = I probably will not use this service.
5 = I definitely will not use this service.

RESPONSE						SERVICE
1	2	3	4	5	24.1	Personal counseling
1	2	3	4.5	5	24.2	Social and interpersonal relationships
1	2	3	4	5	24.3	Marital counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.4	Vocational counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.5	Educational counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.6	Crisis situation counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.7	Stress and anxiety management training
1	2	3	4	5	24.8	Career development counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.9	Exploration of personal life goals, values, attitudes, and abilities
1	2	3	4	5	24.10	Study habits and study skills
1	2	3	4	5	24.11	Interests, values, attitudes, and personality testing
1	2	3.5	4	5	24.12	Individual counseling on a walk-in or appointment basis
1	2	3	4	5	24.13	Divorce adjustment counseling
1	2	3.5	4	5	24.14	Resource information and/or referral to other professionals
1	2	3	4	5	24.15	Test anxiety management training
1	2	3	4	5	24.16	Time management training
1	2	3	4	5	24.17	Single parenting counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.18	Building self-confidence
1	2	3	4	5	24.19	Second career counseling
1	2	3	4	5	24.20	Training in assertive communications

25. What additional services might the University Counseling Center offer to help women who have returned to college after an interruption in their education?

(see Appendix E)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

PLEASE MAIL THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter
Follow Up Letter

1807 North 20th Avenue
Pensacola, Florida 32503
November 14, 1978

Dear Student,

The enclosed questionnaire is being sent to women enrolled at the University of West Florida's main campus and branch campuses who are 24 years of age or older. This group represents women who have had some interruption in their formal educational training before coming or returning to the University. What is held in common by this group is the experience of "re-entry to the formal educational process" with all its accompanying challenges and problems.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to determine the counseling needs of this group. The time you spend in completing this questionnaire will be greatly appreciated. Your participation in this study is important; the results will be utilized in expanding the services of the University Counseling Center to meet the needs of this group. A stamped return envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Please respond now; don't put the survey aside to be answered at a later date!

This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of education for Nova University. My coordinator is Dr. Pauline G. Einbecker.

This study is about and for women. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Barbara H. Ray
Counselor/Consultant

1807 North 20th Avenue
Pensacola, Florida 32503
November 28, 1978

Dear Student,

On November 14, 1978, you received a questionnaire which addressed the counseling needs of women 24 years of age or older, re-entering the educational process at the University of West Florida's main campus or branch campuses. I have not yet received your response.

It is a busy time of the year and a questionnaire can be easily misplaced. Still, your response is important to the expansion of services of the University Counseling Center. I am sending you another copy of the questionnaire and ask that you take a few minutes to fill it out and return it to me.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Barbara H. Ray
Counselor/Consultant

APPENDIX D

Suggestions by Respondees for the University of West Florida to Improve Services for Returning Women

SUGGESTIONS

Q. What might the University of West Florida do--if anything, to help women who have returned to college after an interruption in their education?

A. Have an orientation session prior to commencement of the quarter to include effective study skills, time management, ways to build confidence and improve self-image, overcome math and test anxiety and encourage a course in speech.

Mail booklet to returnees with tips for successful re-entry.

Have a special advisor for special students.

Assess "where they are" academically and make recommendations.

Make grants as easily attainable as are those for other minority students.

Orientation session for potential employment areas since most women return to college to gain employment.

More vocational and career counseling.

Schedule classes for the working person in mind.

Schedule more basic courses in the evening to encourage a return to college.

Information of requirements for teaching recertification.

Work-study like co-op both at the graduate and undergraduate levels for those women who may have problems making the transition from homemaker to working woman.

Inform returning women of the social groups open to them for membership.

Better faculty advising at satellite campuses.

Make available at the satellite campuses similar services as are found on the main campus, such as counseling.

Offer more education courses at nine and ten time blocks.

Make faculty sensitive to needs of the returning woman.

Make available information on federally guaranteed student loans offered by local banks.

APPENDIX E

Suggestions by Respondees for the University Counseling Center to Improve Services for Returning Women

Q. What additional services might the University Counseling Center offer to help women who have returned to college after an interruption in their education?

A. Make themselves available as a place to begin when a special student doesn't know to whom to go for advice.

An in-depth program designed to renew self-confidence for those who feel it lacking when competing with bright, quick minds should be designed.

Acquaint them with the University and counseling services.

Send booklet on time management and study skills.

Help and encourage them in attaining their goals.

Female MBA majors should be advised they will be a minority in classes and need assertiveness training and confidence building to handle the situation.

Publicize the Counseling Center as a supportive service to the returning woman on campus.

Make available counseling services at satellite centers.

Support idea of co-op in major to facilitate smoother transition from University life to work life, especially for the returning woman who has never worked.

Participate in orientation session after the commencement of the quarter.

Offer more career and vocational counseling.